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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANAA 001688

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/15/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PARM](#) [MASS](#) [MCA](#) [YM](#) [MARITIME](#) [SECURITY](#)

SUBJECT: VADM NICHOLS MEETS WITH ROYG DEFENSE, INTERIOR
MINSTER, YCG COMMANDER

REF: SANAA 1377

Classified By: DCM Nabeel Khoury for reasons 1.4 b and d.

1. (C) Summary. Visiting U.S. NAVCENT Commander Vice Admiral Nichols met with the Ministers of Defense and Interior and the Commander of the Yemen Coast Guard (YCG) on June 12, 2005. All three ROYG officials expressed their gratitude to the USG for its assistance in establishing and training the YCG, saying that even in its infant stage the force is having a positive impact on coastal security. VADM Nichols assured his ROYG interlocutors that the USG would continue to support Yemen's efforts to build its maritime security capabilities.

Yemen is Poor, Yemen Needs More

2. (C) Minister of Defense Alaiwa delivered his standard message to senior USG military and civilian officials: Yemen is poor and underdeveloped; fighting the GWOT is our first priority, but it has exhausted our treasury; therefore, we need much more USG assistance. "Yemen is a stage for al-Qaida and other (re: al-Houthi) terrorists," Alaiwa told VADM. We appreciate U.S. assistance to the YGC, continued the DM, but Yemen does not have a real navy, and no money to buy parts or build ports.

Smuggling of Weapons, Drugs, and People

2. (C) VADM Nichols explained NAVCENT'S maritime security mission in separate meetings to the Ministers of Defense and Interior. A coalition force made up of the U.S., U.K., Germany, France, and Pakistan has two objectives: to prevent terrorists from using the sea as a venue for attacks against ships and oil infrastructure at sea; and, to prevent terrorist from using the sea to move operatives and equipment to conduct attacks on shore. A major issue in this AOR is smuggling of weapons, drugs and people, continued VADM. NAVCENT combats smugglers by pressurizing their routes. "While smugglers may not be directly connected to terrorism," said VADM, "terrorists are their customers."

Return of U.S. Navy to Aden Port?

3. (C) VADM Nichols pointed out to the Interior and Defense Ministers how well NAVCENT's maritime security operations and priorities coincided with Yemen's security interests, suggesting that Yemen and the YCG could benefit from participating more routinely in joint monitoring and interdiction exercises and missions. "It need not be anything complicated," said VADM, "your officers are always welcome on our ships." Defense Minister Alaiwa asked when he would see a U.S. Navy vessel return to Aden Port. VADM Nichols responded that he is working on a U.S. Naval visit "in the not too distant future," and that the best scenario would for the first U.S. port visit to Aden since the 2000 USS Cole attack would be as part of a joint U.S.-Yemen maritime activity or exercise.

Coast Guard Making A Difference

4. (C) Both Alaiwa and Alimi expressed their gratitude to VADM Nichols for U.S. assistance to the Yemen Coast Guard, noting that the force is already having a positive effect on combating smuggling and increasing coastal security. "We hope our cooperation with the U.S. in developing a coast guard will lead to an end to illegal immigration," commented Alimi, "as this is a major economic and security problem for Yemen." Alaiwa, as usual, did not miss an opportunity to push for greater U.S. involvement in Somalia, complaining that Somali refugees in particular were a major drain on ROYG resources.

5. (C) Yemen Coast Guard Commander General Ali Rasa told VADM that the YCG was now ready to move into territorial waters, but needed 25-30 meter boats to supplement YCG classroom work with practical training. He also requested USG help in

surveying Bir Ali Island to determine a location for a coast guard station, implying that the YCG has given up on plans to build at Safir Port (ref A.)
Krajeski